

Fix Your Soil

Soil Checklist — a printable companion to Guide 2 of 6

Assess It

- ☐ Do the squeeze test to see whether your soil is sandy, clay, or somewhere in between, and write down what you find.
- ☐ Check your drainage by watering a section and watching whether it soaks in within 30 minutes or pools.
- ☐ Look for earthworms by digging a foot-square hole 6 inches deep and counting them. Five or more is healthy; zero means you need to build organic matter urgently.
- ☐ Get a soil test from your county cooperative extension for exact pH, nutrients, and organic matter, and repeat it every 3 to 5 years.

Feed It

- ☐ Add 1 to 2 inches of compost across all beds, and lay it on top instead of digging it in.
- ☐ Decide what your soil test actually flagged — a structure problem (soil amendment), a nutrient gap (organic fertilizer), or both.
- ☐ If pH needs adjusting: agricultural lime raises it, elemental sulfur lowers it. Follow the test's recommended amounts.
- ☐ Look for the OMRI Listed seal on any amendment or fertilizer — ask if you can't find it.

Build It

- ☐ Mulch all bare soil with 2–3 inches of straw, wood chips, or shredded leaves.
- ☐ Set up a permanent path so foot traffic never compacts your planting beds.
- ☐ Plan a cover crop for any bed that will sit empty this off-season.
- ☐ Start or refresh a compost pile — even a wire circle with scraps and leaves is enough.

At the Garden Store

- ☐ Buy compost first — it solves more problems than any specialty product.
- ☐ Ask "do you carry locally produced compost?" — it's often better quality and supports your community.
- ☐ Skip anything with a very high nitrogen number unless a soil test confirms you need it — excess nitrogen invites pests.

Condensed from RootDelight's soil health guides and non-synthetic amendment research. Read the full guide and check your progress online at rootdelight.com/rd_courses/fix_your_soil.html.